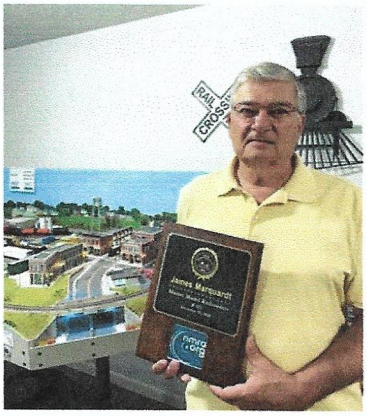
MMR #671 Jim Marquardt



My love of trains started when I was a child growing up on a farm in rural Indiana. We lived near the Pennsylvania RR double mainline just east of Fort Wayne, Indiana. At that time (mid-1950's), there were trains running both ways every 30 minutes or so. I remember running outside and waving to every engineer and then watching to see what they were hauling. I continued watching until I graduated from college and moved to an area where there was no railroad in my backyard.

As a child, I had a windup train that was set up at Christmas time but I had no real exposure to model trains until later in life. When our sons were young, I decided they needed a model train in the basement. I constructed a winding track on a few sheets of plywood and bought each of them an engine and a few cars that they played with for a few years. Then things got busy for them with school and sports, and my wife's and my career demanded more of our time. We then moved to a new house and the railroad was disassembled.

A few years before I retired, a friend suggested that I consider joining a modular model railroad club. That reignited the desire to get involved in model railroading. I constructed a module, bought a new DCC engine and started to meet other people in the hobby. One of my new friends in the modular club suggested I join the NMRA and attend Division 3 North Central Region monthly meetings. It was during one of these meetings that Jim Macino (Achievement Program Coordinator for Division 3) gave a presentation of the NMRA Achievement Program and suggested that members get involved in earning AP certificates to develop new modeling skills and work towards earning an MMR. This presentation resonated with me as it seemed to be similar to what was required to become an Eagle Scout (which I had proudly achieved as a teenager) and a way to develop a whole range of modeling skills that I could use in my new-found hobby.

My first award was the Golden Spike in 2018, which I earned while working on my HO modules. After that, I went to work planning a model railroad for my basement that would support operations. My plan was to develop the skills needed to build the model railroad and use those accomplishments to earn the AP certificates needed to become an MMR. With the plan laid out, I went to work building benchwork, collecting supplies, building turnouts and structures, and developing new skills, all of which were needed to earn the necessary AP certificates. I was making considerable progress but only when I had time, as grandchildren had now become a priority. Then COVID hit – that was a game changer. Suddenly, I now had time to pull all the accomplishments together, finish the missing pieces, prepare the documentation, get the judging done and earn the MMR. I was awarded MMR #671 in December 2020.

AP Certificates Earned

- Golden Spike
- Electrical
- Civil
- Structures
- Assoc Volunteer
- Scenery
- Chief Dispatcher
- Cars